

Operation: MYTH

by nicrt

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Summary: During the Human-Covenant War, ONI made a ground-breaking discovery on glassed planet Aether. A few years of research was done afterwards but when complications arose, they decided to send out a team of soldiers to handle them. Codenamed, Operation: MYTH.

1. Prologue

****Disclaimer: ****Characters/factions/items that were not mentioned in any Halo franchise (e.g Diego Alvarez) belong to me. I do not own any characters/factions/items that do belong to the Halo franchise (e.g Master Chief Spartan-117).

****Prologue****

****1820 hours, April 10, 2539**

>UNSC **_**Sword of Arthur**

>_Planet Aether's Orbit****

Captain Luke Dawson watched the planet below with little interest, part of its surface coloured with angry red and molten yellow. Where white clouds used to be, black haze crept on the surface, the signs of glassing. Though the planet was 'saved' from a full glassing from the Covenant, the planet was evacuated due to the high levels of radiation and toxic haze. Ironically, the planet's name was the Greek word for air and light. Now it was just darkness and dust.

Dawson sighed and rubbed his eyes. It's been two days since he last slept and at least four hours since he last rested. He was beginning to think he had somehow caught a case of insomnia. Three years after the planet was evacuated, some drone had picked up a strange reading of energy. The Captain was chosen to accompany a group of scientists on the search.

And all they found so far was just a ghostland.

He looked towards his left, where the doorway would lead to his

private quarters. What he would give to actually get in his bed and have a nice quiet nap. Hell, even a coma sounds inviting right now. The things lack of sleep could do to you was-

"Sir?" an officer had come up to him, a datapad in hand. It was one of the hourly reports.

Dawson cleared his foggy head. Maybe next time.

"What is it Garcia?" he asked.

"Sir, we've been scanning eastern part of the planet for any signs of the anomalies ONI informed us about. So far, just spikes in radiation levels, possibly Gamma waves, and-"

"If it's still the same as the other reports so far Garcia," Dawson said in a lazy-like tone, "Then you are dismissed."

"Of-of course, Sir." Garcia turned around, had just taken two steps when his datapad alerted him of something.

Garcia looked down, furrowed his eyebrows, the lines of stress reappearing on his forehead. "That's...odd. Sir." he looked towards his leader, who looked back at him. "Well...we've just picked up on a strange reading. Not like any kind of radiation with seen."

Dawson woke up at this last bit. "Then what is it?"

Garcia fumbled with his datapad for a moment, asking for feedback from his team who had scanned the location. "It's not any kind of electromagnetic waves we know of. Neither is it of any Slipstream space radiation. It's...something else entirely."

Dawson stayed silent, reeling in this new bit of information. Then he spoke, his voice grave. "Contact ONI. Tell them phase one of Project Myth is completed."

Please Review =)

**A/N: **Check out my new fanfic, a crossover of Halo and Assassin's Creed, _Master of Destiny._

2. Old Dog, Better Tricks

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**A/N: **Edited chapter. I reviewed the whole chapter and it didn't work well with what I had planned out at all. Apologies. I hope you'll enjoy the new one though. I just added new things to it.

Episode 1**: Old Dog, Better Tricks****
>**

>1745 hours, March 16, 2543
Institute of Warfare
>Planet New Olympia
Awal An-Nujum System**

It was somewhat of a regular routine to Alvarez now, waking up to another day only to watch four or five newbies get mopped on the training-ground floors. It was funny at first, watching the students get smacked around by stimulations but it just got tiring (even pathetic) after awhile.

Up in the control centre, Alvarez shook his head as Athena announced the end of simulation round. The students all groaned as they picked themselves up and limped towards the locker rooms. He entered in his observations on the latest test run when Ares appeared on the terminal to his left. Ares was well muscled for a hologram. He wore ancient Greek armour, a helmet on his head and was equipped with a spear on his right hand.

"A total of five hours and 30 minutes and still they couldn't eliminate the enemy." he grumbled.

A slight shimmer on Alvarez's right meant that Athena appeared at her terminal. She was in a chiton, with a helmet, a spear in one hand and an olive branch in the other.

"Even so, it was just their first try against a Zealot class Elite. They would have an approximate 40% chance of winning in three weeks to come."

Alvarez rolled his eyes. The two were, in a way, his personal , due to his position as HOD. Though to him, it was more of a detriment than privilege. Alvarez tapped 'Enter' on the keyboard, rubbed his eyes, then spoke into the mic.

"Alright students. Hit the showers. Training session has ended."

He switched the mic off before turning to the two. "Athena, do a systems check on the stimulation rooms. Ares, have the reports I've been expecting in soon."

Simulation Rooms were new in the world of training recruits. They were rooms with an area of 7140 metres/square, installed with obstacles that varied daily. Students were given rifles loaded with paintballs at the beginning of every session, and every session was always a new scenario Alvarez made. The name of the game was to survive, as in, not getting hit by paint. Much like an old Earth game he once read about.

To Alvarez though, the obstacles and scenarios was a walk in the park. It was the androids that were a challenge. 8 feet of metal, modelled to be nimble but strong, equipped with holographic disguises. And Alvarez normally disguised them as Elites.

"Of course Sir." Athena said. "Shall I order for repairs as well?"

"For the androids or students?" Ares huffed. "The reports are currently being uploaded Sir."

"Go ahead Athena. Thank you Ares." Alvarez said, suddenly feeling very old. Even though he was in his late thirties, it felt like he had aged a couple of decades in the past few hours. "Put it up at my station please."

"Yes Sir. The rep-" Ares paused, a flicker of light as his processed.

"Ares?"

"Sir, there's an Admiral Nelson Judge here to see you."

* * *

><p>Alvarez knocked on the oak doors of the Headmaster's office. He looked at Headmaster Harris standing to his right, who nodded at him. Her secretary was busy typing something, though he saw her peering eyes.<p>

Alvarez brushed off some invisible dirt on his uniform before entering the room. It was a rather small room, with bookshelves lined along the walls, a rectangular oak table with papers piled on it and chairs arranged neatly around a smaller coffee table.

Admiral Judge still looked the same. Same arched eyebrows, same crooked nose, same steeled grey eyes. He was about Alvarez's height and stood rather royally. He was in full uniform which meant he was on official business. Five years ago, in the same room, in the same uniform, in the same stance, the Admiral had given the opportunity of renewing his life.

He was sure that he was here to take it away from him now.

Steeling himself, Alvarez closed the door and took a step forward. He saluted at the Admiral until he was told to stand down. Then Admiral Judge smiled and grabbed him in a tight bear hug. The two friends laughed together, and though Alvarez was wary, it was still good to see his old friend.

"Diego," Judge said, "Good to see you again! Heard you were promoted to HOD now."

Alvarez shrugged. "That means extra paperwork Nelson. Not to keen on that."

Judge laughed. "Agreed. That is something not worthwhile. I bet it can't be as bad as mine."

Hollow laughter mixed with a tinge of regret. Something was up.

"So Admiral huh? Looks like the top brass finally upgraded you." Alvarez said.

"Yeah... And if there's one thing I know, it's that the uniforms are itchy." Judge joked.

They laughed, the sound quite monotonous, and it died down quite quickly too.

"Take a seat Diego. Let's talk." Judge sat on one of the guests chairs.

Alvarez complied, sitting opposite of him, on the other side of the coffee table. "I heard about Psi Serpentis."

"I'm pretty sure the whole universe has." Judge sighed. "We lost a good man. And many other souls too."

"Ever met him?"

"Cole? Not personally, no. I was in charge of...something else."

"I'm related to this something else aren't I?" Alvarez meant it as a statement. "Nelson, you and I both know when we talk, we just say it. No fuzzy warmth or sugar coating."

Judge nodded and sighed again. "How's life here Diego?"

"Good. Very good actually. You?"

"You know the story. Colonies glassed to oblivion while the aliens trample on our troops. I'm not saying we're loosing. I'm saying we've lost too much." Judge gave a frustrated look. "And with Admiral Cole gone..."

"You're not here for that." Alvarez said bluntly.

"No, I'm not." Nelson said.

The two sat in silence. Then Judge spoke again. "Are we good to talk in private?"

There was the sound of a flurry of papers, hushed voices and then heavy footsteps before the door of the reception room slammed shut in a hurry.

"We're good now." Alvarez answered.

Judge looked down at his hands. "Do you remember Aether?"

Alvarez looked up at him. Flashes of fire and echoes of gunshots filled his mind. Dead bodies, either burnt or melted, littered his home's streets. The Covenant ship loomed in the skies. Yes. He remembered it well.

"What about it?" he asked in a rather dry voice.

Judge looked at him in the eye. "Three years after Aether was left to burn, ONI had picked up on a rather...interesting discovery. Captain Luke Dawson was chosen to lead a ship consisting of 320 crewmen, soldiers and civilian scientists on the...expedition. What they discovered is entitled classified though.

"For ten years, they digged and digged at the forsaken planet. They studied all they could there, to the point they built three stations to continue their research there. However, there has been some recent bad news.

"A group consisting of three civilians and four soldiers were on the planet, researching. That was about two weeks ago. And we haven't heard from them since."

Alvarez took this all in in a heartbeat. "Why tell me all this then?"

It was the million dollar question in the discussion.

Judge spoke in the cold tone he had whenever he was about to give details on a mission.?

"ONI has ordered a small group of soldiers for a search and rescue operation. These people have intelligence, intelligence too risky to expose, too important to destroy and too dangerous to obtain. And, as luck would have it I have to find these soldiers."

"Because you're the one in charge." Alvarez stated.

Judge gave a sad smile.

"But you're not here to just recruit me for a simple rescue." Alvarez continued, chin in his hands, elbows on his knees.

Judge frowned, his face with a 'Is he damn telepathic' expression.

"That's for another time Diego. Will you do it?"

Alvarez stared hard at Judge. In their time as squad mates at Basic, Judge was known as Frostbite, for his cold and acid words. Alvarez was known as Ice for his cold reactions to everything. But now, when he thought about it, the only time he thawed out was six years ago.

"You know why I won't." he finally responded.

Admiral Judge, friend but superior retorted, "I know why you should."

"Enlighten me."

"You said you wanted to protect Earth and all her colonies once Diego. You said you wanted to save all you could. You have a chance to do that still. Do it for humanity. Do it for Laura."

Alvarez stiffened at her name.

"You gave me this opportunity Nelson." Alvarez challenged. "You gave me this new life. And you have the power to take it away from me. So why not just do it? Ruin my life just as the others have, Sir."

He watched the fire in Judge's eyes dimmed.

Judge sighed. "You're right. I'm sorry. Between you and me, Diego? I'm only doing this 'beat-about-bush' thing because it's..." Judge paused, unable to find the right words. "Look, this mission is more than just a simple rescue, like you suspected. I can't say anything more. All I can say it's something you won't like. And unlike others, you're the only one with a choice."

"If I won't like it, why come to me still then? I told you to stop sugar coating this crud Nelson. Play it to me straight, and then I will listen."

Judge was silent then, thinking. Alvarez was too smart for him. He

knew that. He watched as Judge reached into his pocket, pulling out a small datachip. He placed it onto the table before he slid it towards Alvarez while never taking his eyes off him.

"Because," Judge finally said. "You're the only one I know who would get the job done. No matter what."

The two stared at each other, assessing the situation. A deep silence fell between them, as if it was trying to suffocate the two. And Alvarez finally spoke; words that lifted Judge's heart.

"I'll think about it."

* * *

><p>"Welcome back Sir." Athena greeted as Alvarez entered his quarters.<p>

Alvarez nodded in reply, headed straight for his bed. But when he saw the flickering acknowledgement light at his desk, he redirected himself and sat down at his chair. His computer had received various reports from other instructors, messages from friends and a letter from the Headmaster. Alvarez forced himself through the reports, if only to escape the proposal Judge had just given him.

Though one-sided, Judge was right, he did have a choice. Judge had made sure he had one in the end. He only needed Alvarez to think about it. And when he thought about things, the cons were more than the pros. Alvarez had a good life here as a teacher. Despite the shortcomings as one, he didn't have to worry about losing a teammate or any of the such.

Alvarez shook his head clear, leaned back and yawned. He took a minute to stare into space, while he fingered something in his pocket. A minute later he realized it was the datachip Judge had given him. Alvarez took it out, flipping it between his fingers.

What secrets did this thing hold? What was it that Judge knew but Alvarez didn't? Why did he give this to him? More importantly, why should he go?

Alvarez then inserted the datachip into his personal computer after it sprang to life. He selected its files and read its contents. What he found was absolutely despicable. Alvarez shut his computer off in disgust. Did Judge really expect Alvarez to go with this mission after reading _that_? Angry, Alvarez attacked his reports with a little more vigour, if only to erase everything about the meeting before.

"I know why you should."

Alvarez continued in his crusade, going through the reports and trying to forget.

"Because you're the only one I know who would get the job done. No matter what."

Alvarez kept going on but his mind seemed to have delve deeper into thought.

"You said you wanted to protect Earth and all her colonies once Diego. You said you wanted to save all you could. You have a chance to do that still. Do it for humanity. Do it for Laura."

His hand turned into a tight fist. He grunted in frustration. His inner demons were haunting him.

"Diego...You have the power, the gift, to save people. And no matter how difficult it seems, you'll do it, right? You'll continue to protect. To save. To fight. No matter what, right?"

Alvarez screamed a frustrated scream, sweeping the reports off his desk, as he stood up. His chair toppled over, he panted in frustration as Laura's words kept on repeating. The papers fluttered, dropping to the floor in a feather-like motion.

Hypocrite.

He clutched the sides of his head as the word scarred him worse than he imagined. He knew this time would come. When the ghosts of his past would finally hurt him.

"I'm giving you this chance to forget Diego. You'll be teaching them good things. Hopefully, you'll do well."

"Sir, if you're ok, why aren't you out there? On the field?"

"Between you and me sir, all you've thought me is to stay true to my duty. One day, you'll realize sir, that the universe would be better with someone like you. You say people die because of you. That it would be better without you and go on. I think people like us can make it better. Even if people die. We still got to fight. No matter what."

"Ethan Greyfolk has shown admirable talents and feats. He has displayed excellent scores, both on the field and at strategic planning. Even under heavy pressure, Greyfolk has kept a cool head and worked with what he has. Puts himself before others, and the mission before himself. If we hadn't done the medical tests, he would have been mistaken for a Spartan."

>

>Alvarez didn't realize he had his eyes closed. That he was on his bed, shivering. He was a broken man. With no resolve, no spirit. But Greyfolk did. He had watched Greyfolk before. Had he not, he wouldn't have believed the given report. Greyfolk had sacrificed himself for the mission, ensuring its success and his teams' safety. Though only a simulation, it was worthy of a real fight. Alvarez smiled as he recalled the session. Remembering, he noticed how similar his actions were to Alvarez's own in the past. Greyfolk was an example to look up to. Just like Cole. They did everything they could to get the mission done.<p>

A thought, an idea, had struck him then. A sensation, a new burning emotion elated his heart. He needed to do something. That much he knew. He realized why, now, Judge needed him. He called out to Ares, and ordered the preparation of the simulation room.

* * *

><p>"Are you sure about this Sir?" Athena called through the speakers.<p>

Alvarez loaded his rifle with paint, checked his gear and nodded in satisfaction. "Sure as hell Athena. Begin simulation."

"Beginning simulation Sir." Ares responded.

A minute later, the empty room realigned itself. Blocks came out of the walls, two metre high columns erupted from the floor, blocking his vision of the other end of the room. Then the whirring sound of doors opening alerted him that the androids were out. The name of the game was stealth. Alvarez was determined to be predator, not prey.

He stepped quietly behind a pillar, waited and listen. The silence gnawed at him, but he kept still and patient. Let the enemy come to you, he spoke in his mind. It was the moment he heard the buzz of gears and the installed sounds of an Elite did he move. Rifle up, he shot at the incoming Elite, whose holographic image sizzled as paint enveloped it. It charged at Alvarez, who kept on firing until it finally crashed the floor.

A slight whistle of mechanical hum caught Alvarez's attention. He spun around, only to get a drizzle of paint on his leg. Had it been plasma, his armour would have melted. He dodged the shots by rolling behind another pillar, pulled the handgun from his side and fired at the Elite. It mimicked him, rolling to one side, assuming fire soon after. Alvarez, hid then returned fire. The Elite closed in, rolling behind column to column, closing in on Alvarez.

Alvarez made a run for another pillar, all the while keeping his rifle trained on the Elite. It spewed purple paint, hitting the Elite squarely on the chest. It grunted a few times, before it fell to the ground. Alvarez heaved as he rested behind the pillar, honestly wondering if he was out of shape. The sudden flicker of holographic light alerted him. He grabbed his handgun, shot at the invisible Elite. It rolled to the left; Alvarez rolled to his right. Alvarez aimed at its head; it shot at pointblank. Paint covered his eight shoulder while a single paint bullet caused the Elite to fall dead.

Movement caught his eye. The near silent steps of the last Elite chilled him. But he kept quiet, steeling himself and reloaded his rifle. The Elite huffed silently as it breathed, the sound system of the android working perfectly. The sound of hissing plasma echoed through the room. Alvarez knew the sound of the energy sword. He breathed in deeply, stood up and walked into the light.

The Zealot Elite clutched the weapon tightly as it saw Alvarez. Alvarez noted how well the realism of the androids were. The two stared at each other for a moment. Alvarez went through the formulated plan he had, his mind working fast than he had ever tried. A minute passed. Then two. And suddenly the Elite charged.

It brought the sword back, the elbow high in the air. Alvarez, stood firm, his feet springy, twitching for movement. The Elite struck forth, swinging the sword up as soon as it reached a foot from Alvarez. He dodged, rearing backwards, falling onto the ground. As he

did so, his rifle aimed and sputtered paint all over. The Elite grunted and retreated backwards, clutching his torso. Its foot came down at Alvarez as soon as it recovered. He rolled away, reloaded, then fired again. The Zealot dodged, rolling between two pillars.

Check.

Alvarez, ran forward, crying a battle cry, firing his rifle of paint at it. It grunted loudly, stuttering backwards again, forcing itself into a wall. Alvarez kicked at the Elite, first in the chest, than at the sputtering sword. Knocked back, the Elite roared. Alvarez shot paint into it's mouth. The android twitched before it finally shut down.

Sweat trickled down his face. Oxygen entered his lungs as he gasped for air. Inspiration struck him and new found courage and adrenaline coursed through his veins.

"That was brilliant Sir!" Ares exclaimed. "In less than half an hour. Two minutes and 53 seconds earlier than the previous best record by Greyfolk Sir."

"Are you sure you retired because of a battle wound Sir?" Athena called out. "You seem to have none at all."

Praises fell on deaf ears. Alvarez clutched the rifle tightly, shaking. How he missed the thrill. How he had spent all that time, that talent, only on teaching. How Greyfolk would meet a similar fate if Alvarez won't step in. He shook his head clear.

Alvarez told Ares to contact Admiral Judge. He had his answer. And he had a few favours for him too.

Please Review =)

End
file.